Candidate Statement GNSO Council Chair

7 October 2023

Candidate: Gregory DiBiase (Registrar Stakeholder Group, North America)

Citizenship/ Residence: USA

Dear Councilors,

I am honored to be nominated for the GNSO Chair by the Contracted Parties House. I accept the nomination. The following statement provides information about my background as well as my thoughts on how best to Chair the GNSO Council. I would also like to thank Sebastien Ducos and John McElwaine for their tutelage as GNSO Leadership over the past year. I have learned a tremendous amount during my tenure as Vice Chair and will seek to emulate their open and effective management of the GNSO Council.

1. Background

Besides a brief stint selling billboards in Los Angeles immediately after college, my entire career has been spent in the Domain Name Industry. I am an attorney and my first job after law school was at ICANN. I spent two years in ICANN's Compliance Department learning the Registry and Registrar Accreditation Agreements and addressing concerns from the ICANN Community.

My next job was managing compliance for the Endurance International family of registrars (now part of Newfold Digital). This work involved understanding different registrar business models and deciding how to best develop and implement ICANN policy. During this time, I began participating in ICANN Policy Development, beginning with the Privacy and Proxy Accreditation Services Issues working group. Within the Registrar Stakeholder Group, I chaired the Compliance sub team, responsible for facilitating interaction between registrars and ICANN Compliance. During my tenure, relations improved considerably; instead of relying on unactionable comments during ICANN meetings, we wrote out and categorized our concerns so ICANN could more effectively address them. This model is still used today at ICANN meetings.

After Endurance, I took a position as lead counsel for Amazon Web Services' domain registration service, Route 53 Domains. This service leverages an ICANN-accredited registrar, Amazon Registrar, Inc. When I started, this registrar was in its infancy but now manages over one million domains and is directly accredited with hundreds of top-level domains. While at Amazon, I greatly increased my participation in ICANN policy development, continuing to participate in policy work (like the Transfer Policy and the RDRS working groups), and joining the GNSO Council as a Registrar Stakeholder Group representative. During my time on Council I have steadily grown my engagement, beginning with participation on Council Small Teams (DNS Abuse, RDRS, Subpro), to leading Council discussion and business as Vice Chair. I'm very proud of the work the Council has accomplished over the last several years and look forward to tackling the new issues the coming year will bring.

2. The GNSO and the Role of the Chair

I believe I have the necessary experience to effectively lead the GNSO Council. Over the past year as Vice Chair, I have taken on increasing amounts of responsibility and believe I've shown myself to be unbiased

and efficient in facilitating dialogue and building consensus. This experience is supplemented by my prior policy work outlined above, giving me the requisite knowledge for the job. I have also studied how the Chair of the GNSO can improve the GNSO's effectiveness. The overall mission of the GNSO Council, as stated in the bylaws, is relatively straightforward: the GNSO Council is "responsible for developing and recommending to the ICANN Board substantive policies relating to generic top-level domains." The trick is to do this work efficiently and transparently. I think we can improve in these areas in the following ways:

1. Outline topics in easy-to-understand terms. Too often ICANN and its participants use acronyms and terms of art that are incomprehensible to newcomers. This undermines transparency and makes it more challenging to attract new participants. As Chair, I will provide context around topics during GNSO meetings so that a relative newcomer can have a better understanding of Council discussions.

2. Reduce letter lag. Different constituencies within the ICANN community often communicate via public letter. This enhances transparency by creating a record, but, in practice, is often inefficient because letters written by committee are not always clear and responses to letters (also drafted by committee) take time. As Chair, I will clarify intent as soon as possible after receipt of a letter (e.g., inviting the author to speak at a Council meeting) and catalyze the Council to respond in a timely fashion.

3. Buttress transparency of "Small Teams" and direct conversations between GNSO Councilors and other ICANN participants. "Small Teams" are groups of Councilors that work on discreet, often thorny, issues and bring their findings back to Council. The Council has also been holding more direct conversations with other ICANN participants (e.g., Councilors have met with members of the Board to better understand their concerns about policy recommendations). Both of these developments have been effective in resolving some knotty issues but some within the community have raised concerns about transparency. As Chair I will ensure all these interactions are documented, easy to find, and explained in detail to the full Council.

4. Reduce the number of items on the Action Decision Radar. ICANN org has a detailed list of ongoing policy work in their Action Decision Radar. It is relatively easy to get new projects onto this document (e.g., request an issues report on a topic), but, not unlike Hotel California, it is difficult for initiatives to leave this list. For ICANN to function properly, this list can't expand indefinitely. Attention needs to be paid to closing things out. As Chair I will identify things close to completion and push to wrap up the work.

5. Track what is pending from ICANN Org and the Board. Council and the ICANN community often find themselves waiting on ICANN or the Board to take action (e.g., recommendations are sent from Council to the Board but the Board does not vote on them for several months). Concerns about these types of delays are sporadically raised by Councilors but not in an organized fashion. As Chair I will keep a running list of pending items and raise them more regularly (e.g., as an AOB at the end of meetings).

6. Intervene faster when work appears deadlocked. This concept was articulated in last year's GNSO Council Strategic Planning Session and should always be top of mind for the Chair. If a working group is stuck on an issue, this should be escalated to Council as soon as possible to find a solution.

These are my initial thoughts on how to run Council more effectively. I know others have ideas and I want to hear them. I look forward to collaborating more deeply with the community and will strive to serve as Council Chair to the best of my ability should I be elected.